



## Senior Agenda Coalition of RI

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**William Flynn, MSW**  
Executive Director

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March 4, 2021

#### Via E-Mail

Chairman Marvin L. Abney  
House Finance Committee  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of The House Finance Committee:

I am writing on behalf of The Senior Agenda Coalition of RI in strong support of **H-5012 (Rep. Slater), the Nursing Home Staffing and Quality Care Act**. We are an independent coalition of agencies and individuals mobilized to improve the quality of life of older Rhode Islanders. Our advocacy has focused primarily on improving our state's system of long-term care for seniors to enable them to "age in the community" for as long as possible. However, we acknowledge that the older we get, the greater the chances that we may need nursing home care at some point.

This legislation would mandate an average of 4.1 hours of care for nursing home residents, which is the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) recommendation. It would also put direct care workers on a path to a living wage. According to 2020 Quarter 2 data from CMS, RI nursing homes rank 41st in the Country for direct care hours for residents – and last in New England.<sup>1</sup>

The coronavirus pandemic's deadly impact on nursing home residents and staff demands that we must improve nursing home staffing by enacting this legislation. A recent U.S. Senate Committee Staff Report<sup>2</sup>, "COVID 19 and Nursing Homes: What Went Wrong?" lists three common challenges

in all nursing homes that contributed to the numbers of infections and deaths: *Difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff*; Unique susceptibility of seniors to this virus; and Congregate living institutions' greater risk for spread of infections.

The same report, in looking at factors that differentiated between nursing homes that performed best in the pandemic and those that performed worst, stated: "Staffing is a key measure of nursing home quality, by most accounts. Researchers have uncovered a link between nurse staffing shortfalls and the spread of infection among both nursing home residents and hospital patients."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, it is important that the General Assembly act now because 2021 marks an important milestone---when an "age wave" of baby-boomers begins turning 75, an age at which their odds are 1 in 2 of needing some care in their final years. *Our state's population of persons between age 75 and 84 is projected to grow by 16,000 persons by 2025, an increase of 30% (source: RI Statewide Planning).*

Respectfully Yours,



William F. Flynn, Jr. MSW  
Executive Director

Footnotes:

1. <https://nursinghome411.org/staffing-q2-2020/>

2<https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/SFCNursingHomesCOVIDMajorityStaffSFCReport23Sep2020FINAL.pdf>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/study-finds-link-between-hais-and-nurse-understaffing>.